HOLLYWOOD SUPERSTARS
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$2.75 CAN
APR 91
EPIC COMICS®

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HOLLYWOOD SUPERSTARS™

THE FINAL STUNT!

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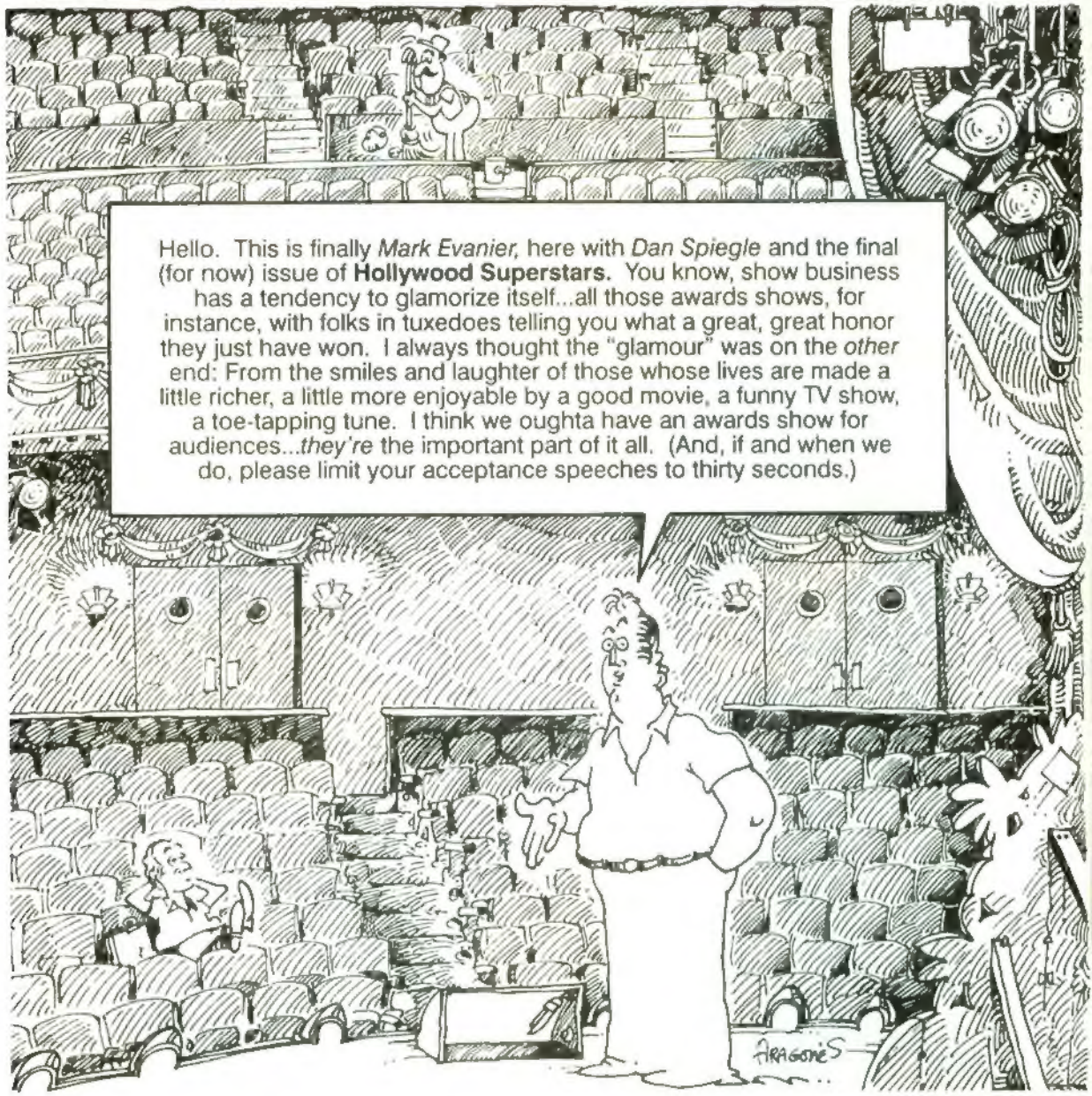
Hello. This is finally *Mark Evanier,* here with *Dan Spiegle* and the final (for now) issue of **Hollywood Superstars.** You know, show business has a tendency to glamorize itself...all those awards shows, for instance, with folks in tuxedoes telling you what a great, great honor they just have won. I always thought the "glamour" was on the *other* end: From the smiles and laughter of those whose lives are made a little richer, a little more enjoyable by a good movie, a funny TV show, a toe-tapping tune. I think we oughta have an awards show for audiences...*they're* the important part of it all. (And, if and when we do, please limit your acceptance speeches to thirty seconds.)
ARAGONÉS

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Printed in Canada

ALL EYES WERE ON THE PLANE:

WHAT'S GOING ON?

OUR FRIEND IS TIED TO THE WING OF THAT PLANE BUT THEY CAN'T LAND! THE LANDING GEAR IS BUSTED!

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO, REINHART?

I SHOULD HAVE LISTENED TO JERRY. IF I GET OUT OF THIS ALIVE-

WELL--?

UM. MAYBE HE COULD FLY LOW AND SHE COULD JUMP OFF?

HOW DO YOU RELEASE THIS THING? MAYBE I CAN JUMP OFF IF HE GOES LOW ENOUGH--
WAKE UP! WITH ALARM SOAP

UH, NAYLOR, YOU GOT ANY IDEA HOW WE CAN GET HER DOWN WITHOUT HURTING THE PLANE?
NAYLOR?
GET ME UP THERE BUT DON'T GET TOO CLOSE TO THE PLANE. YOUR BLADES COULD BLOW HIS RUDDER OUT.
I'LL FLY LOW OVER THE GRASS! JUMP OFF!
I CAN'T! THIS BELT WON'T OPEN! IT'S STUCK!
WHAT DO YOU THINK HE'S GONNA DO?
I THINK HE'S GOING TO RESCUE HER...
THEN I THINK HE'S GOING TO GRAB YOU BY THE LEGS AND MAKE A WISH.
IF I WERE YOU, I'D RUN WHILE I STILL HAVE KNEECAPS.

DON'T WORRY! I'LL GET YOU DOWN!
I CAN'T UNHOOK THE BELT! IT'S RUSTED!
MR. NAYLOR, I'M SORRY I DIDN'T LISTEN TO YOU! YOU WERE RIGHT!
WE'LL TALK LATER! JUST HOLD ON!
RUSTY EQUIPMENT...NO TRAINING...JEEZ, DOES REINHART SPEND ANYTHING ON SAFETY?
PILOT! YOU THINK YOU CAN FEATHER THAT THING AND GO TO FINE PITCH?
HUH? WHAT'S THAT MEAN? I NEVER FLOWN ONE OF THESE BEFORE TODAY!
LISTEN! THAT GUY CAN'T LAND THAT THING!
I NEED YOU TO GET DIRECTLY OVER IT!
OKAY-- BUT I DON'T GET IT.

WHAT THE HELL IS THAT GUY UP TO?
HE BETTER NOT HURT THAT PLANE. IT'S RENTED!
YOUR CONCERN FOR YOUR STUDENT'S SAFETY IS TOUCHING.
WHAT'S THIS EXTRA LEVER BETWEEN THE THROTTLE AND THE MIXTURE CONTROLS?
JUST KEEP IT STEADY...

THIS GUY COULDN'T FLY A PAPER PLANE IN A HURRICANE.

OKAY. NOW I'LL GRAB THE CONTROLS AND YOU CLIMB OVER ME. WE'RE GOING TO CHANGE PLACES!

MADE IT!

BUT WHAT'RE YOU GONNA DO?

TRY TO LAND THIS THING WITHOUT WRECKING THE WINGS AND CRUSHING MELODY!

THAT MEANS PUTTIN' THE PLANE DOWN WITHOUT A JOLT! AND I GOT A WEIRD IDEA HOW TO DO IT!

LAWSON MOVING CO.
LAWSON MOVING CO
WHAT THE HELL'S THAT GUY DOING?
THE PLANE'S DOING SIXTY AND THE VAN'S DOING SIXTY. IF HE LANDS ON THE VAN, THERE'LL BE NO IMPACT!

THIS WASN'T THE FIRST TIME JERRY NAYLOR HAD PUT A PLANE DOWN ATOP A SPEEDING MOVING VAN...
LAWSON
MOVING CO.
LAWSON
MOVING CO.
...BUT IT WAS THE FIRST TIME THE CAMERAS WEREN'T ROLLING WHEN HE DID IT. AND IT WAS THE FIRST TIME THE VAN'S DRIVER DIDN'T KNOW WHAT WAS HAPPENING...

I WANT TO THANK YOU FOR NOT DRIVING THROUGH ANY TUNNELS.
...AND THERE WASN'T EVEN A CAMERA ROLLING.
QUICKLY, NAYLOR GOT HER DOWN...
I WANTED TO HELP, THAT'S ALL. JUST TO HELP. YOU'VE BEEN SO NICE TO ME SINCE I GOT HERE...
I JUST WANTED TO FIND OUT HOW CHAZ'S OPERATION WORKS... YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT IT.
IT'S ALL RIGHT.
NO, IT'S NOT ALL RIGHT. ALL YOU'VE DONE FOR ME, JERRY... I LOVE YOU FOR IT. YOU'RE THE MOST WONDERFUL MAN I EVER MET...

OKAY, REINHART. IT'S OVER.
YOU'RE RIGHT. I'LL CALL A WRAP FOR TODAY. I CAN FIND SOMEONE ELSE TO REPLACE THE GIRL TOMORROW..
NO, I MEAN IT'S OVER!' YOUR STUNT SCHOOL, YOUR CAREER, EVERYTHING!
I HAVE ENOUGH EVIDENCE ON HOW YOU RUN YOUR GREASY OPERATION TO SHUT YOU DOWN AND MAYBE PUT YOU BEHIND BARS!
NOW, WAIT A MINUTE...
WHAT'S WRONG, BOSS?
THE NERVE OF THAT GUY. HE'S ACTING LIKE THIS WAS MY FAULT OR SOMETHING—!
YOU'RE THROUGH, NO MORE GETTING KIDS KILLED OR CRIPPLED SO YOU CAN MAKE A FEW BUCKS.
IF THERE'S ANY JUSTICE IN THIS WORLD, THEY'LL TOSS YOU IN THE SLAMMER 'TIL YOU'RE NINETY, TOO.
ALL THE WAY BACK TO TOWN IT WAS...
YOU SAVED MY LIFE. I ALWAYS HAD THIS FANTASY THAT MY PRINCE CHARMING WOULD COME ALONG AND SAVE MY LIFE...
WELL, DON'T EXPECT ME TO WEAR TIGHTS AND SING...

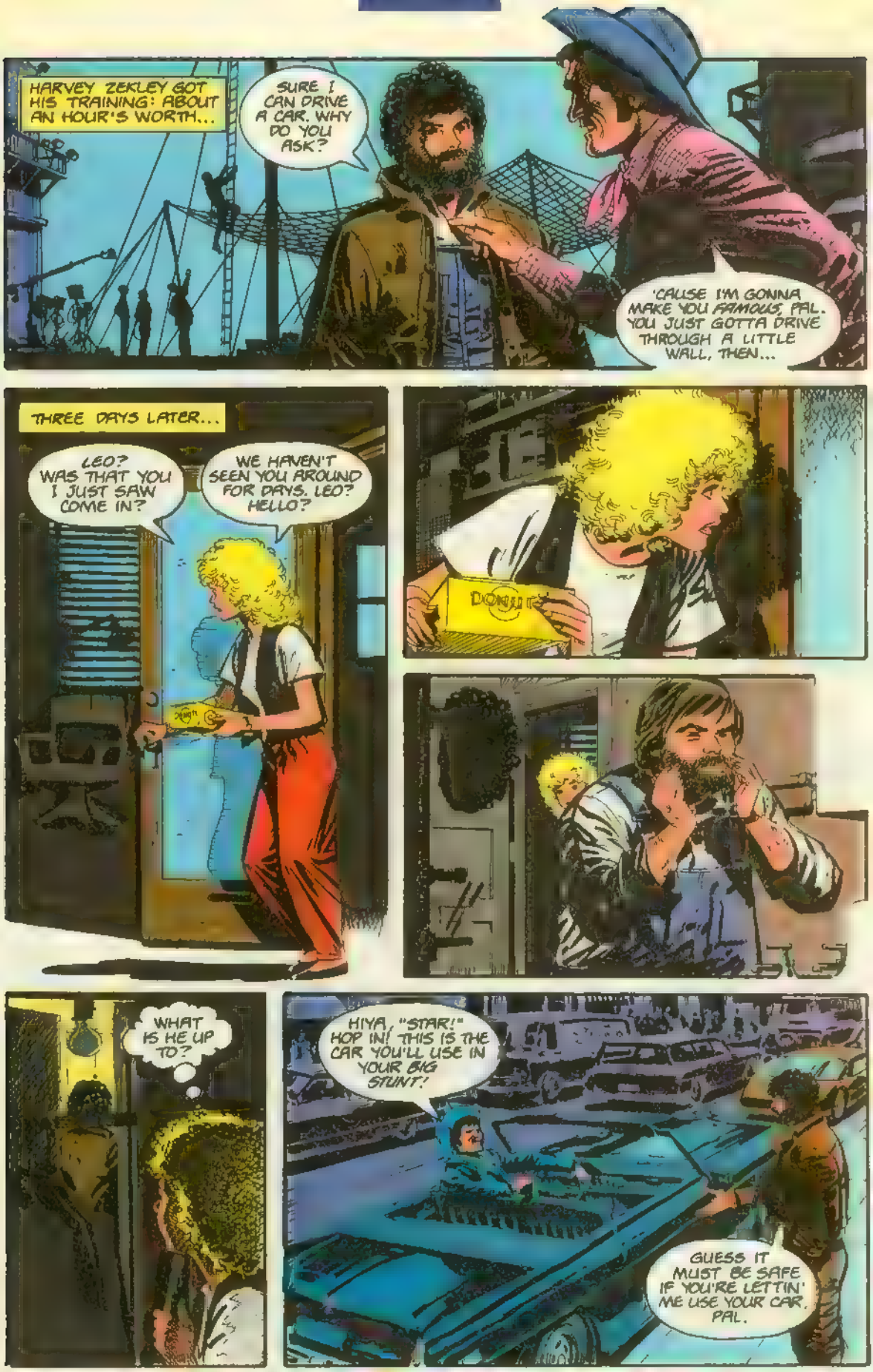
COULD WE STOP AT THE HOSPITAL SO I CAN SEE HOW RON IS? HAVE YOU HEARD ANYTHING ABOUT HIS CONDITION?
UH...
YOU KNOW, HE WAS HURT PRETTY BAD IN THAT ACCIDENT...
POOR KID. ALL SHE'S BEEN THROUGH AND NOW THIS...
I NEVER FIGURED OUT WHY GOD SOMETIMES PICKS ONE PERSON TO DUMP ALL THIS STUFF ON.
THE REST OF THE TRIP WAS PASSED IN SILENCE.
NOTHING COULD BE DONE ABOUT RON GAGE. BUT PLENTY COULD BE DONE ABOUT CHAZ REINHART...
THIS IS GOOD... I ASSUME THESE PEOPLE WILL ALL TESTIFY. WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO WITH ALL THIS?
PUT CHAZ REINHART OUT OF BUSINESS.
AND IN JAIL.

OUGHT TO BE A CINCH WITH ALL YOU'VE GIVEN ME HERE. I CAN FILE FOR A HEARING RIGHT AWAY.
BUT TELL ME, MR. NAYLOR... YOU'RE THE EXPERT. WHAT WOULD HAVE *PREVENTED* THIS KIND OF THING FROM HAPPENING?
SOME COMPETENCE IN THIS OFFICE.
LET'S GO, LEO
EIGHT WEEKS LATER, A HEARING WAS HELD IN DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES ON THE MATTER OF CHARLES "CHAZ" REINHART...
MR. REINHART, I DON'T UNDERSTAND HOW YOU CAN SAY THAT YOU WERE PROVIDING THESE YOUNG PEOPLE A "*SERVICE*"...
WELL, IT'S LIKE THIS, YOUR HONOR...
KIDS WANT TO GET IN THE MOVIES... I GET 'EM INTO THE MOVIES. YEAH, IT'S *STUNT WORK!* SO?
YOU DON'T START OUT IN THIS BUSINESS PLAYING OPPOSITE MERYL STREEP, AFTER ALL. IT'S A FOOT IN THE DOOR...
...I'M TELLING YOU, A LOT OF THESE KIDS ARE GONNA GO *FAR*...
YEAH. I GUESS FOREST LAWN *IS* KIND OF A DISTANCE FROM HERE.
THE HEARING LASTED SIX DAYS...

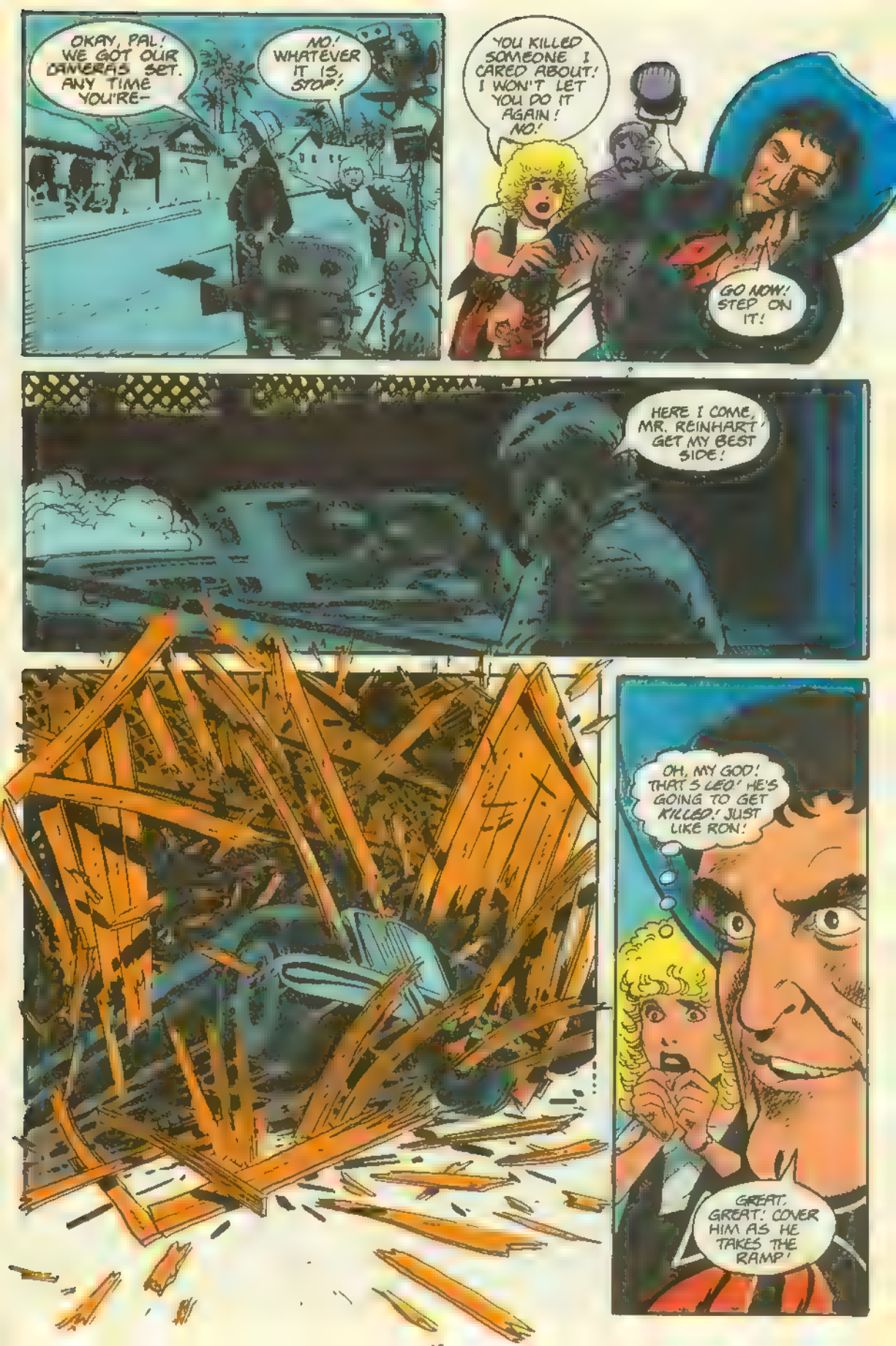
FINALLY, THE MOMENT CAME...
DON'T WORRY. WE'VE GOT HIM. WE'VE GOT HIM.
THANK YOU, JERRY. THANK YOU.
JUDGE HAS A DECISION.
IT SOUNDED GOOD AT F.RST...
MR. REINHART'S "STYLE" COULD WELL BE TERMED NEGLIGENT BY SOME, I SUPPOSE...
...HOWEVER, IN LIGHT OF THESE RELEASE FORMS, I SEE NO CASE FOR CRIMINAL CHARGES. MR. REINHART, YOU MAY GO.
YOUR HONOR! YOU CAN'T DO THIS! THIS MAN CAUSED PEOPLE TO BE DISFIGURED... KILLED EVEN!
SEE YA, PAL.
IT'S NOT FAIR!
AMAZING HOW MANY PEOPLE THINK THERE'S SOME REASON SOMPLACE WHY LIFE IS SUPPOSED TO BE FAIR...
HANEY KNEW. IF LIFE IS GOING TO BE "FAIR," SOMEONE HAS TO MAKE IT BE "FAIR"...
SHE'LL SEE.
"OH, LEO, I DON'T KNOW HOW I COULD HAVE OVER-LOOKED YOU. IT'S YOU I REALLY LOVE..."
SHE'LL SEE

FOR THREE DAYS, NOVICE STAND-UP COMEDIAN LEO HANEY PONDERED IDEAS, RETURNING AGAIN AND AGAIN TO...
SHE'LL SEE.
EVEN ON STAGE...
THERE'S A SIGN ACROSS THE STREET: "PSYCHIC READER" AND A NUMBER TO CALL FOR AN APPOINTMENT...
WHY DO I NEED TO CALL FOR AN APPOINTMENT? IF SHE DOESN'T KNOW I'M COMING, WHO NEEDS HER?
SHE'LL SEE.
FINALLY CAME THE IDEA ..
AND SO "HARVEY ZEKLEY" APPLIED TO JOIN TEAM KAMIKAZE ..
AIN'T NOTHIN' I WANT MORE'N THIS WORLD THAN TO BE ONE O' THEM THERE STUNT GUYS...
WELL, I DON'T JUST TAKE ANYBODY BUT YOU STRIKE ME AS HAVING A LOT OF POTENTIAL...
HERE'S WHERE ALL THOSE DIALECT LESSONS IN ACTING CLASS PAY OFF. I THINK I'LL BE FROM ALABAMA...
THERE'S A MATTER OF A LITTLE PAPERWORK TO FILL OUT.
RIGHT. "SIGN YOUR LIFE AWAY."
"JUST A STANDARD FORM," HE CALLED IT...
DON'T MIND THE TEENSY PRINT MY LAWYER MAKES ME PUT THAT IN. YOU KNOW HOW LAWYERS ARE.
DON'T I EVER. YOU GOT ANY STUNTS I CAN DO RUNNING OVER LAWYERS, I'LL DO 'EM FOR FREE.

BOSS! PHIL SNIDER IS OUTSIDE TO SEE YOU.
PHIL SNIDER? TO SEE ME? OH, THIS COULD MEAN BUCKS, BIG BUCKS.
PARDON ME, HARRY. GOT A PRODUCER TO TALK TO.
HARVEY.
PHIL SNIDER PRODUCED "IT'S FANTASTIC," THURSDAY NIGHTS AT 8 00...
WE NEED A STUNT SEGMENT WE CAN PUBLICIZE FOR SWEEPS WEEK...SOMETHING REALLY FANTASTIC.
I THOUGHT YOU HAD YOUR OWN STAFF, PHIL. I THOUGHT I WAS TOO "RECKLESS" FOR YOU. REMEMBER?
WE WERE NUMBER THREE IN THE COUNTRY WHEN I SAID THAT. THINGS CHANGE. WE WERE THIRTY-THREE LAST WEEK.
RIGHT NOW, I NEED "RECKLESS." BUT I CAN'T HAVE MY GUYS PRODUCE IT...
I GET IT...
I PRODUCE THE STUNT, YOU PAY ME UNDER THE TABLE. ANYONE GETS HURT, YOUR SHOW WAS NEVER INVOLVED...
IF IT WORKS OUT FINE, I "SELL" IT TO YOUR SHOW, YOU GET BIG RATINGS. HOW MUCH MIGHT THEY BE WORTH?
IF IT GETS US RENEWED... HOW DOES A HUNDRED THOUSAND SOUND? BUT I NEED SOMETHING REALLY HOT...
THAT ONE OF YOUR NEW GUYS? WHAT'S HIS SPECIALTY?
WHY, THAT'S, UH, HARRY ZECKLE. BEST STUNT DRIVER IN THE COUNTRY. YOU AIN'T HEARD OF HIM?
HE'LL DO YOU A STUNT SO HOT THEY'LL CANCEL "COSBY." JUST TRUST OL' CHAZ...

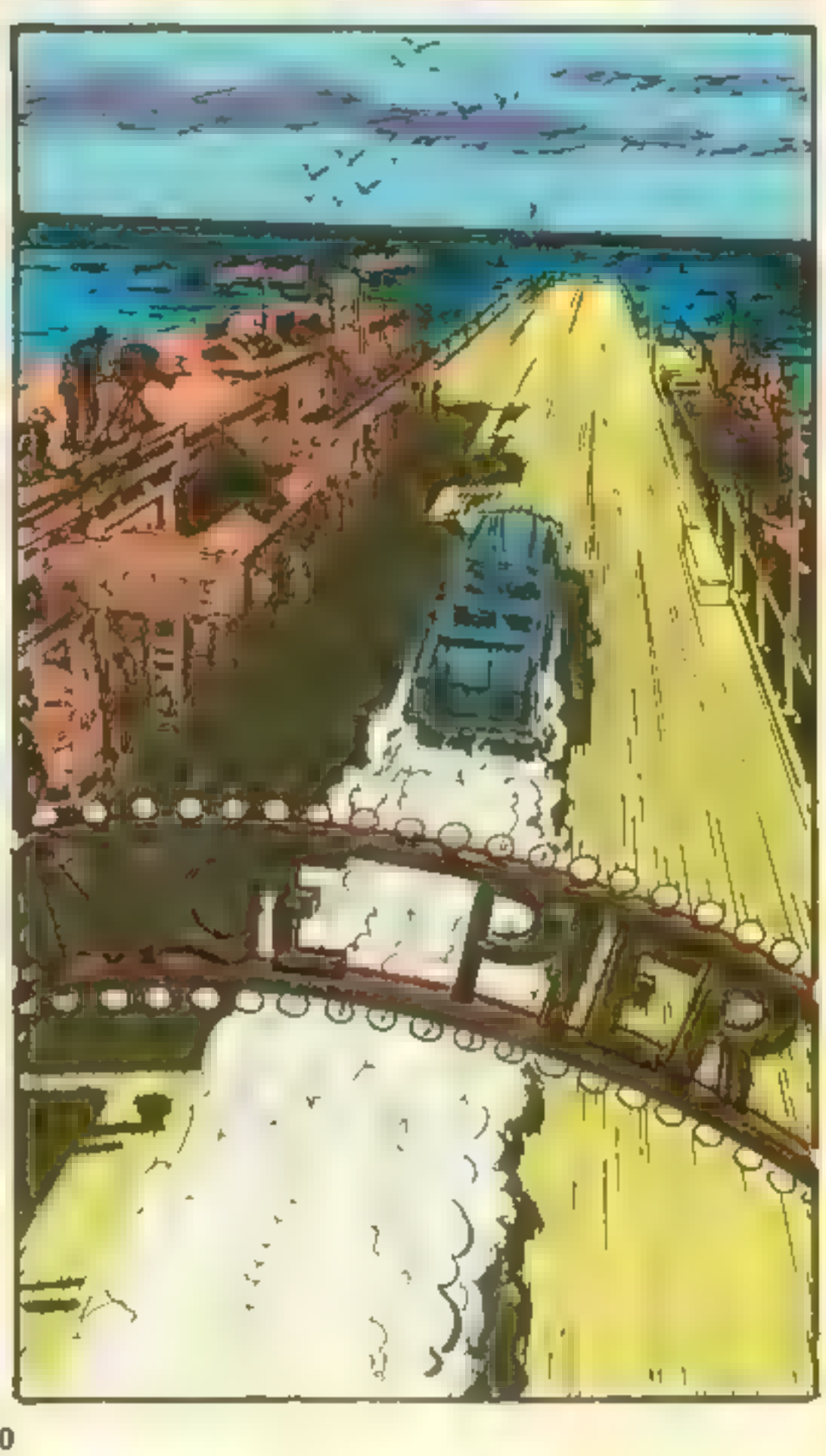

HARVEY ZEKLEY GOT HIS TRAINING: ABOUT AN HOUR'S WORTH...
SURE I CAN DRIVE A CAR. WHY DO YOU ASK?
'CAUSE I'M GONNA MAKE YOU FAMOUS, PAL. YOU JUST GOTTA DRIVE THROUGH A LITTLE WALL, THEN...
THREE DAYS LATER...
LEO? WAS THAT YOU I JUST SAW COME IN?
WE HAVEN'T SEEN YOU AROUND FOR DAYS, LEO? HELLO?
DONUT
WHAT IS HE UP TO?
HIYA, "STAR!" HOP IN! THIS IS THE CAR YOU'LL USE IN YOUR BIG STUNT!
GUESS IT MUST BE SAFE IF YOU'RE LETTIN' ME USE YOUR CAR, PAL.

NO! LEO...DOING A STUNT FOR CHAZ REINHART? WHO WOULD BE STUPID ENOUGH TO--?
BESIDES ME.
HURRIEDLY, MELODY RACED TO HER CAR AND FOLLOWED THEM TO THE VENICE PIER BOULEVARD...
ANY MOMENT NOW, TOP STUNT DRIVER HARV ZEKLEY WILL ATTEMPT ONE OF THE MOST DARING AUTOMOTIVE FEATS...
WHERE IS HE? I'VE GOT TO STOP HIM!
HARV IS A TRAINED PROFESSIONAL WITH HUNDREDS OF HOURS OF EXPERIENCE. DO NOT TRY THIS YOURSELF.
I WISH JERRY WE'RE HERE. HE'D KNOW WHAT TO DO. WHERE IS HE? WHERE IS LEO?
SHE'S ALL SET UP IN THERE. I'LL RADIO YOU WHEN TO GO.
GREAT, MR. REINHART. AND I REALLY APPRECIATE YOU GIVING ME THIS CHANCE.
I HOPE THE CAMERAS CAN FOLLOW THIS KID. IT'S ALL ONE TAKE BUT IT'S A LULU. YOU GOT HIS RELEASE?
I GRABBED THE WHOLE FILE OF THEM. RIGHT IN HERE.


OKAY, PAL! WE GOT OUR CAMERAS SET. ANY TIME YOU'RE-
NO! WHATEVER IT IS, STOP!
YOU KILLED SOMEONE I CARED ABOUT! I WON'T LET YOU DO IT AGAIN! NO!
GO NOW! STEP ON IT!
HERE I COME, MR. REINHART! GET MY BEST SIDE!
OH, MY GOD! THAT'S LEO! HE'S GOING TO GET KILLED! JUST LIKE RON!
GREAT, GREAT! COVER HIM AS HE TAKES THE RAMP!

PEACH CAFE

EXPRESS


PIER

BEAUTIFUL! OKAY, GO SEE IF YOU CAN FIND HIM!
ANOTHER ONE WHO CARED ABOUT ME BUT I DIDN'T CARE BACK ENOUGH...JUST LIKE RON...
OH, GOD... OH, GOD...

HE'S NOT DOWN THERE!

HE'S GOT TO BE DOWN THERE! KEEP LOOKING!

GUESS THE UNDERTOW PULLED HIM OUT TO SEA OR SOMETHING.

YOU KILLED ANOTHER ONE, REINHART. WELL, THIS TIME, YOU'RE THROUGH!

HEY, THE KID SIGNED A RELEASE. IT'S JUST LIKE THE LAST TIME.

YOU GOT A RELEASE. HUH? OKAY, LET'S SEE IT.

THIS CLOWN KEEPS DOGGING ME. I'M GONNA GET A COURT ORDER TO MAKE HIM LEAVE ME ALONE. SHOW HIM THE RELEASE.

IT'S HERE BUT...UH, CHAZ. IT'S UNSIGNED.

IT CAN'T BE! HE SIGNED IT! I SAW HIM SIGN IT!

NO SIGNED RELEASE? WELL, LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE GOING TO SWING FOR THIS ONE, CHAZ. YOU'RE RESPONSIBLE!

NAYLOR, YOU SAW THE THING. IT WASN'T MY FAULT! YOU GOTTA HELP ME. IF YOU TESTIFY FOR ME...
AND LET YOU GO ON KILLING PEOPLE? NO WAY.
I'M SORRY WE DIDN'T TELL YOU WHAT WE WERE PLANNING. BUT WE WEREN'T SURE IT WOULD WORK.
I THOUGHT I LOST YOU... I THOUGHT YOU'D BEEN KILLED TOO...
I-I'LL CLOSE DOWN THE SCHOOL! I'LL GET OUT OF THE STUNT BUSINESS! I SWEAR TO GOD!
JERRY... I COULD GO TO PRISON...
WHICH IS WHERE YOU BELONG. WE'LL DISCUSS THIS...
I'VE NEGLECTED YOU. YOU CARE SO MUCH ABOUT ME...YOU'RE ALWAYS THERE FOR ME...AND I NEGLECT YOU.
WELL, I AM KINDA EASY TO NEGLECT...
I LOVE YOU... AND JERRY, TOO. YOU'RE MY BEST FRIENDS IN THE WHOLE WORLD.
WELL, YOUR BEST FRIENDS HAVE CHAZ SWEATING BULLETS...
WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN?
WE'LL MAKE SOME SORT OF DEAL. I'LL TESTIFY FOR HIM IN THE MYSTERIOUS DEATH OF HARY ZEKLEY...
...IF HE ACCEPTS RESPONSIBILITY FOR RON GAGE AND A FEW OTHERS.
...BUT IT WAS NOT TO BE...

LATER THAT DAY, DRIVING HOME, CHAZ REINHART'S CAR SKIDDED ON A PUDDLE...

HE WAS INSTANTLY KILLED.

WHEN THE NEWS REACHED THEM...

I HAVE TO WRITE MY MOTHER ABOUT THIS. CAN I USE YOUR PEN?

CH

YOU DON'T WANT *THAT* ONE. IT HAS DISAPPEARING INK IN IT.

WELL, THANKS ANYWAY, PHIL...

I REALLY THOUGHT I COULD HELP YOU BRING HIM TO JUSTICE...

HE HURT A LOT OF MY FRIENDS AND GAVE OUR BUSINESS THE WORST POSSIBLE NAME...

...AND, JUST WHEN SOMEONE FINALLY HAD HIM OVER A BARREL...

WHAT A WAY FOR THE KING OF THE STUNTMEN TO DIE.

THE BEST ELECTRICIAN I EVER KNEW DIED PUTTING UP CHRISTMAS LIGHTS.

I WISH THERE WAS A WAY TO TELL PEOPLE ABOUT THIS.

WELL, THERE'S *ONE* WAY...

I KNOW A GUY WHO WRITES COMIC BOOKS...STORIES ABOUT HOLLYWOOD...

I COULD TELL HIM THE STORY AND HE COULD CHANGE THE NAMES AND WRITE IT UP FOR ONE OF HIS BOOKS...

YOU THINK ANYONE WILL BELIEVE IT?

WELL, IT'S WORTH A TRY.

THE END

SHOW BUSINESS

by Mark Evanier

Cartoons by Aragonés

I wish you people would stop dying on me.

I don't mean you folks reading this (though it wouldn't be the worst idea you could heed). I'm addressing a number of people with whom I have worked in the TV business. I am by no means a veteran of the field but, still, I have been here long enough to have folks pass away, soon after working with me and hopefully not because of it.

Three of them were men who specialized in cartoon voices, meaning that they were a part of my life on both ends: They were there when I was nine years old, sitting there and watching cartoons all day...and they were there when I was theoretically grown up, writing cartoons for a living, putting the lie to all predictions that hours of staring at "Rocky and His Friends" could not possibly amount to anything. (One of my favorite jobs of the last ten years was the worst-paying. Hanna-Barbera Studios hired me to cull through their earliest cartoons and select an outstanding array to be issued on videocassette. I did most of it from *memory*, harkening back to films I hadn't seen since I was ten, then spent a few afternoons in the basement at H-B, hunkered over a movieola, checking to see that the good ones were still good. Can't tell you how much I loved sitting there, doing that, having folks pass by and ask what I was doing so I could say, "I'm working." Because I'd actually done it: I was being paid to watch Huckleberry Hound cartoons.)

Here then, my encounters with three men whose voices will never leave me, just as they will never leave the world.

When Mel Blanc passed away, the folks at Warner Brothers ran a touching double-truck color ad showing Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Porky Pig, Foghorn Leghorn, Tweety, Sylvester, Yosemite Sam and a few others, all with heads bowed and voices stilled. They, along with the Flintstones' Barney Rubble, were the most famous of his much-publicized "thousand voices."

In truth, Mel probably didn't have a thousand voices or even a hundred. But he had plenty and an amazing percentage of them gave breath to classic cartoon characters in very funny films. The great skill of Mel Blanc was as an actor: It is one thing to affect a funny voice, quite another to mold a coherent, believable characterization with it and to wring every drop of humor out of every line. This was never so evident as in Mel's later days, and following his death, when others were sought to assume his characters. Many were found who could sound like Bugs or Daffy...but being able to do an imitation of Richard Burton doesn't mean you can *act* as well as Richard Burton and being able to replicate Daffy Duck's voice doesn't make you Mel Blanc.

Over the years, I met Mel several times, never for a longer time than it takes to tell someone you've always loved their work. Finally though, in 1986, I needed to hire and direct him for a TV special I was producing.

The show included inserts of Bugs Bunny cartoon clips, redubbed with new dialogue to fit our storyline. The folks at Warners gave us the clips, the phone number to call to hire Mel Blanc for the redubbing...and a warning that he didn't come cheap. Mel was, after all, a star — and stars cost. Our business folks went through a week of haggling, politely talking Mel's representative down from an initially-ridiculous opening demand to a price that our budget could (barely) afford. The deal was finally made and I was informed that Mel was doing a "Heathcliff" recording session the next day, expected to wrap at around 2:00. To save him driving someplace just to record our few lines, we booked that studio for fifteen minutes after Mel's other session. I got there at 1:30, waited until the other actors left, and took over.

The studio was a tiny rathole on a side street in Hollywood. Half was a cramped audio-recording set-up; the other half was a rehearsal hall. I remember thinking, as I waited for "Heathcliff" to finish, that if I were booking a recording studio, I would never ask the great Mel Blanc to work in a dump like this.

I introduced myself anew to Mel and handed him the copy we were going to record. His eye fell on the first line: "Ehhh...what's up, doc?"

I said, "You want to rehearse it for about an hour?"

He chuckled. "I think I know the part."

Mel went into the studio and I took my place as director, next to the engineer. Over the speakers came the voice of Bugs Bunny, getting into character. Which is when the thought hit me. *This is Mel "Bugs Bunny" Blanc and I'm directing him.*

Wait one minute.

There I was, sprawled on the living room floor before our 17" Packard Bell console, bringing me Sheriff John's Lunch Brigade on channel eleven in glorious black-and-white. I was seven, wolfing down a lunch of tuna salad that I hoped to have completely digested by the time I was eight. Sheriff John hawked Maggio-brand carrots, Fizzie tablets, Flav-R straws, Nestle's Quik and the latest in Remco toys, all equally edible. I could stir for an hour and not get the Quik to dissolve in my milk.

The Good Sheriff had a whole mess of old Warner Brothers cartoons — those not shown, *ad nauseum*, by Skipper Frank over on channel five — which he ran, over and over and over again. One — which I now know to have the title of "Slightly Daffy" — was darn near a daily event.

I would lie there, scribble pad at the ready, shattering Crayolas as I raced to draw what I saw on the screen, whether I understood it or not. Most of these were wartime-issue cartoons, filled with caricatures of Hitler, and I once innocently doodled out some Nazi soldiers, complete with swastikas, and displayed them proudly to my parents. This does not go over big in a Jewish household.

And then, seconds later, there I was in this state-of-the-art Roach Motel, telling Mel Blanc we were ready to roll. It was one of those moments when my entire life seems to have transpired in about eleven minutes.

Tape rolled and Mel did the lines. We didn't have the cartoon clip we were redubbing here but I'd seen it enough to know that Mel was doing "What's up, doc?" way too fast to fit. I hit the talkback switch so I could be heard in the studio.

"Mel," I said, momentarily wondering if I should have said Mr. Blanc, "the first line is going over a clip and needs to go a bit slower."

There have been many moments when I have felt like the biggest jerk who walks the planet. And by no means the worst but certainly among them was when I realized that I was telling Mel Blanc how to read, "What's up, doc?"

But he didn't object, not a peep. He did it again and then the other lines. I looked up at the studio clock. We had thirteen minutes left I asked him to run the lines again and, as he did, I heard bodies massing behind me...dancers from the studio across the hall. They all looked like they'd just seen a flying saucer.

A young man of about eighteen gasped, "Is that...Bugs Bunny?"

"That's Mel Blanc," I said.

The young man began jumping up and down, excitedly. "That's Bugs Bunny!"

I hit the talkback: "Mel, you seem to have a fan club gathering out here." Mel looked through the glass and saw all those folks beaming and I'm sure it wasn't the first time he'd seen those expressions. He turned back to his mike and launched into Porky Pig and Yosemite Sam having an argument, then Sylvester announcing he was going to eat Tweety, then Tweety saying he tawt he thaw a puddy tat, then Daffy, then Foghorn...

As he wound up a three-minute impromptu concert, the spectators broke into applause. Mel came out of the booth with a fistful of color photo handouts of himself and signed one for each of them. As each dancer said his or her name, Mel greeted them in the voice of Porky or Daffy, while scribbling out, "To [Name], Best Wishes, Mel Blanc" on a picture. The dancers scampered back to their rehearsal with their treasures and I walked Mel out to his car. (I got a photo, too. I still have it.)

Out in the parking lot, we got to talking about the problems of doing cartoons the way they now did them. After a few minutes, I glanced down at his cane and suddenly remembered that this man was almost eighty. And I remembered something else:

It was in 1961. I was nine but I knew who Mel Blanc was. So when they announced on the news that he was near death, I knew what that meant: No more Bugs Bunny. Mel had been driving up on Sunset Boulevard, not far from my house, when a car crossed the center divider and hit him head-on, breaking every bone in his body.

I watched all the news reports, sitting there with my little glass of milk, into which my Quik was still refusing to dissolve. They carefully avoided saying he was certain to die but, even at age nine, I knew that was what they meant. I also knew that grown-ups are often wrong.

Mel was then the voice of Barney Rubble on "The Flintstones," Friday nights on ABC. The official story was that Mel never missed an episode; that recording equipment was hauled into the room where he lay in a full-body cast and he recorded the role of Barney from that position. In truth, Mel missed quite a few episodes, his part played instead by Paul Frees, Daws Butler or John Stephenson. Good mimics, all...but I could tell the difference. And I remember the day when finally I heard a new Flintstones episode in which Barney was unmistakably performed again by Mel Blanc. That was how I knew he was going to make it.

Now, standing in that parking lot, talking cartoons, I kept saying to him, "Well, I've taken up enough of your time..." I mean, I didn't want to make him stand there in the hot sun. Not after all he'd been through.

But he wouldn't let me go. For at least an hour, maybe longer, we stood there and talked about his work and my work and about our mutual friend, Daws, the only man (Mel said) he regarded as "competition." Finally, around the eighth time I tried to suggest he stop talking to me and get off his feet, he grabbed me by the wrist and said, "You don't understand. I am so damn thrilled that there are young kids like you —" (I was 34) "— who got inspired by what I did, who got into the business because of it...this is an honor for me."

And I dissolved...just like Nestle's Quik, only faster.

Bill Scott was the Co-Producer (with Jay Ward) and Head Writer of the "Bullwinkle" show. But he was even more than that: He was the voice of Bullwinkle, Dudley Do-Right, Mr. Peabody and oh-so-many voices from my childhood and, I'd wager, yours. Meeting the man, it was easy to see the source of those cartoons' devastating, rapier wit.

I spoke with Bill many times at animation fests and parties. Once, when interviewed about the declining state of cartoon writing, he was nice enough to cite me as an exception to his low opinion of the form. Some compliments mean more to you than others and that one meant more than most.

I spent a number of lunches with Bill and with the current King of Cartoon Voices, Frank Welker (who probably really *does* have a thousand voices); the three of us were to collaborate on a screenplay idea which we'd sold to M.G.M.. Little work got done at those lunches; most of the time, Bill would regale us with Jay-Wardian anecdotes and help Frank polish his impressions of Bill Scott characters. And I can number among the stranger moments of my life, sitting in a posh French restaurant, watching a waiter of atrophying dignity try to retain his aplomb while taking orders for *coq au vin* from two grown men, both talking exactly like Bullwinkle J. Moose.

The last lunch we shared together, Bill was extremely excited. Up on Sunset, there stands a large and wonderful statue of Bullwinkle with Rocky pirouetted on his palm. The statue had once been magnificently-lit and had revolved on its pedestal. Years ago, that is. It was no longer lit, it no longer rotated and most of the paint had flaked away, leaving Bullwinkle with an ugly case of enamel psoriasis. The excitement this day was because Jay had just arranged to have the statue refurbished. Bill would no longer have to avert his eyes as he drove past.

One night, just before Thanksgiving, Bill called to thank me for including him in this movie project; said he in the voice I knew so well, "I've wanted my whole life to do a live-action movie instead of cartoons and I have you and Frank to thank for this." We talked about the statue and how good it was now looking, plus Bill invited me to a production of a play he had directed. A deeply religious and civic-minded fellow, Bill had mounted the production for his local church community center and all the Scotts were involved, either on-stage or in the wings. He suggested I come to the final performance, Saturday night.

I was unable to get there but Frank went. He enjoyed the show thoroughly and, throughout, could hear Bill's distinctive laughter echoing from the back of the hall. He reminded himself to stay around after to compliment Bill on the fine production.

When came the curtain calls, the applause was thunderous. But it dropped off horribly as a cast member — one of Bill's sons, I think — stepped forward to announce that the most important member of the production would not be taking his bow that evening. As a last request, the production had gone forth, though Bill Scott had died on Thanksgiving morning.

"Unexpected" cannot begin to convey the shock — particularly to Frank who had heard and been comforted by Bill's laugh, coming from somewhere in the room throughout the performance. Frank was mistaken, one supposes, though that is perhaps arguable.

I was sitting home working around 10:00 when the phone rang: Frank calling in tears from his car-phone. The man of a thousand voices could barely summon up one to tell me the news.

For the next ten minutes, I paced around a house that had always seemed plenty big before but was somehow imploding on me. I'm sure you know that feeling: You have to get out. Doesn't matter where but you have to get *out*. At just past ten on a Saturday night, the most logical place for me to get out seemed to be the Comedy Store. And it didn't dawn on me that driving there would take me right past the Bullwinkle statue.

A decidedly-depressed me made his way down Sunset — depressed only until I glimpsed Bullwinkle standing there, resplendent in his new gilding of garish paint, squirrel cheerily balanced on moose's hand. Suddenly, inexplicably, I got mad. At whom, I'm still not certain...fate, I suppose. Some aspects of Death are well beyond our ever-grasping, the timing chief among them. Confronted with a random, unplanned homicide, we are apt to speak of a "senseless killing" as if there are a lot of "sensible" ones. And a death such as Bill's — swift and utterly unanticipated — is said to be "untimely," an adjective usually appended when the deceased had any reason whatsoever for living.

I remember pounding on my steering wheel in anger. And I suppose I muttered, "It's not fair," as if there's a point to expecting that Death can ever be that. I was so engrossed that I missed all available parking spaces around the Comedy Store and had to double back.

Slipping in the back way, the first person I ran into was Garry Shandling. "Hey, Mark," he said. "You look upset." I told him, because it was the only thing my mind could think of at the moment, that Bill Scott had died.

The name meant nothing to Garry. Not *that* name. But when I told him that Bill Scott was the voice of Bullwinkle and Dudley Do-Right, Garry's face fell. And I wondered if maybe I shouldn't have saved the news until *after* he'd come off-stage. I made a mental post-it note not to tell any other comics about Bill.

About thirty seconds later, I ran into impressionist Louise DuArt. She asked me how I was. I immediately said, "I just found out Bill Scott died." A few minutes later, Jimmie Walker walked in. "Hey, how's it going?" he asked me. I immediately told him that Bill Scott had died. Wonderful will power on my part, right?

I don't know why but that evening, I found myself wholly unable to formulate any sentence without mentioning Bill. It was like the day Kennedy was shot. You couldn't talk twenty seconds without alluding to it. It was that kind of loss. By midnight, I had half the comedians in Hollywood in tears.

Later that evening, I was talking with a group of them — I don't even quite remember who — and we were all quoting favored Rocky and Bullwinkle moments. And from out of nowhere, I got one of my weirder ideas.

"You know the Bullwinkle statue down the block? Let's see if we can find a funeral wreath to put on it." Everyone thought that was a magnificently apropos notion.

No card, no inscription. Just a wreath. That said it all. And we'd do it anonymously, then tip off the TV news crews. They'd be covering Bill Scott's passing on the news, the next night. Perhaps one of them would send a crew down to get a shot of the wreath. That would bespeak volumes about all we were all feeling.

So it happened that at half past one on a Sunday morning, I was in the back of a loud, crowded nightclub, fumbling through the Yellow Pages in search of somewhere to procure a funeral wreath. I'm not sure why but we were all in agreement that it had to be done that night or not at all.

Like every phone book in every restaurant or club, the Comedy Store's Yellow Pages had large chunks torn from it by folks unequipped with note paper. The whole section on FLORISTS was in *absentia* but groping through what remained of the F's made me think: Funeral parlors have someone on duty all night. They would certainly know where to get a wreath. I dialed up a likely looking mortuary.

A somber voice answered. "How may we be of assistance?"

Sam Kinison was on stage at the Store and I could scarcely hear. I shouted over the din of what passes for Sam's act, "I know this is out of the ordinary but I need to find a place to get a funeral wreath tonight."

"Tonight?" the gentleman asked. It was 1:35 A.M..

"Yes, tonight," I shouted back.

"Where is the deceased lying in state?" he asked.

"It's not for the deceased," I yelled back into the phone. "It's for a statue up on Sunset Boulevard."

"What statue is that?"

I don't know why I answered him but I answered him. "You know the statue of Bullwinkle Moose?"

And right then is when he hung up on me. Can you imagine someone being that insensitive?

Someone desperate to make a call shoved me out of the booth. And since I could feel the Great Idea growing less Great with each passing minute, I slipped out of the Store and headed for my car. Bill, I decided, wouldn't have appreciated a wreath, anyway.

But he sure would have laughed himself sick over that call.

When I was little, everything funny on TV had Daws Butler in it. He was Beany and Cap'n Huffenpuff on the original "Time For Beany" puppet show, which made his probably among the first voices I ever heard. As I grew older, I started to notice that certain voices could be heard in all my favorite shows — like the males in "Fractured Fairy Tales" on "Rocky and His Friends" could also be heard in certain Woody Woodpecker cartoons...and again in certain Warner Brothers cartoons. Mel Blanc always got solo voice credit on the latter but by the time I was nine, I would have bet my favorite Colorforms set that some of the voices were the same. And I would have been right. On the Soupy Sales show, puppets Pookie and Hippie often did little skits that I finally figured out were mimes to comedy records, usually those by Stan Freberg and, yes, that's right, Daws Butler.

And then, of course, there were the Hanna-Barbera cartoons: Daws was Reddy of "Ruff n' Reddy." He was Huckleberry Hound. He was Dixie of Pixie and Dixie, Mr. Jinks, Hokey Wolf, Augie Doggie, Wally Gator, Snagglepuss, Peter Potamus and Lippy Lion. He was Elroy Jetson and half that show's supporting cast. Often, he worked with amazing actors like Don Messick and June Foray but Daws didn't need anyone else in the booth; not really. Incredibly, he was both Quick Draw and faithful sidekick Baba Looie. And in the Snooper and Blabber cartoons, he was both Super Snooper and Blabber Mouse, thereby playing Abbott to his own Costello.

Thus, when I was about ten, I came to the not-altogether-unwarranted conclusion that there was some Federal Law against doing something funny for kids without the participation of Daws Butler. Many years later, when I was still ten but it said thirty-two on my I.D., I had the voice of Daws on my answering machine for a while doing Yogi and/or Huck. And friends who were about my age would call and hope I wasn't home, just so they could hear him. If they got me, they were steamed.

Daws came to know me in the last decade of his life, just as I came to know him in the first decade of mine. We would sit for hours, talking about cartoons and acting and writing and Stan Freberg and the classes he held in the little workshop behind his Beverly Hills home. An extended family of young actors and would-be voice artists huddled there on the Master's sofas, listening to his words, running drills, learning that acting is still acting, even when you're not on camera. He was much loved by his students; I daresay any one of them wouldn't hesitate to deck you on the spot if you said an unkind word about Daws Butler. He was so giving, so willing to share his skills and time with anyone displaying the slightest dram of Talent, that you couldn't help but love the guy. We all did, anyway.

Daws continued doing cartoon voices and teaching his classes until a stroke forced him to suspend both for a time. As strokes go, it was a small one but it thickened his speech and crippled the vision skills he needed to read copy smoothly. His recovery was slow, hampered by the high standards to which he subjected himself. When he finally felt ready to return to the mike, it was on a show that I wrote in, unfortunately, about two days.

One July afternoon, Joe Barbera called me in to ask if I could or would write a special to run in prime time on CBS, come Christmas. I remember saying, "*This* Christmas?" Yes, this Christmas. Or, rather, *that* Christmas.

Why we had such a paucity of time was that months had been frittered away on various drafts by various writers. With the clock ticking and everyone aware that a Christmas Special finished on December 26 ain't much good to anyone, I was chosen. I was known for being fast, I was "network-acceptable" and I knew the characters.

"Fast" was the most important of these. To get a half-hour of animation written, storyboarded, recorded, animated, edited and set to music in under six months is pert near impossible. To complicate matters further, the Animation Union was likely to strike on July 31 so the parts of the process that had to be done locally — that couldn't be shipped off to a foreign studio — had to be completed in less than three weeks. This cannot be done.

But, hey, I'm dumb. And since it was to be a Yogi Bear special, guesting Huck and Quick Draw and Snagglepuss and all my childhood faves — even a cameo by the Flintstones — I said yes, rushed home to my typewriter and wished that someone would hurry up and invent the Word Processor.

That all happened on Tuesday. By late Thursday, we had a script that had been approved by anyone who had to approve it. And it wasn't a bad script, given the circumstances. (The fact that my pride in everything I did for H-B had to be qualified with phrases like "given the circumstances," along with my paternalistic feelings towards their early characters and discomfort at arguing with Mr. Barbera will all be featured prominently someday in an article entitled, "Why I Stopped Working For Hanna-Barbera.")

The script went into the hands of artists who started feverishly to prep it for animation, while I got the okay to messenger a copy to Daws so he could start practicing. You have no idea how weird it is to come home and find a message on your answering machine from Yogi Bear, telling you he likes the part you wrote for him.

Daws began rehearsing, sometimes with me reading the parts of Boo-Boo and the Ranger. His agent, meanwhile, went to work negotiating his fee with the Business Affairs department of Hanna-Barbera. Therein, alas, was then employed a gent who thought he would be doing the company a wonderful service by holding down the fees paid to talent. What Daws' agent was asking for was most reasonable, considering that Daws would be doing, not just the starring role of Yogi Bear but, also, Huckleberry Hound, Quick Draw, Jinks, Wally Gator, Hokey Wolf, Dixie, Snooper, Blabber, Augie Doggie and others. But Mr. Business Affairs offered a "take it/leave it" offer and, when Daws' agent left it, the order was given to recast all those roles with other actors.

Which was insane. Leaving aside the human reasons (all Daws meant to the studio), leaving aside symbolic reasons (Daws *was* Yogi, *et al*, to a few generations)...even leaving aside the fact that all the good voice people would refuse, for reasons of ethics and personal affection, to imitate Daws' voices...it was insane. We were three days from when we had to record and you couldn't replace that many voices that fast. (Years later, when Daws passed away, it took months of auditions to select acceptable sound-alikes. And the man picked for Yogi was a student of Daws' who would never have taken the role if it had meant scabbing on his mentor.)

I still cannot believe how mad I got when I was told all this. I stormed into the Business Affairs guy's office and we spent about twenty minutes screaming at each other. When that didn't change anything, I tried barging into Joe Barbera's office and screaming at him. One look at how upset I was and he picked up the phone, called upstairs and told the man at whom I'd just been screaming, "Give Daws the money. I don't care...just give it to him."

Daws got his money and the show was recorded — with Daws being recorded apart from the other actors so he wouldn't be embarrassed if it took him a zillion takes to get each line. It didn't. The fellow in Business Affairs got his revenge by messing up my screen credit.

December twenty-something, the show aired, completed at the last possible moment. The animation was passable, my favorite joke was missing and, for some reason, the word "Hanukkah," spoken once by Snagglepuss, was bleeped. No one at H-B would own up to ordering the omission but someone must have. (Don't believe me? The show's out on cassette now — "Yogi Bear's All-Star Christmas Caper" — and it's bleeped on the tape. *Hanukkah*. Like that's a naughty word or something.)

Not the best show but I didn't care: Daws Butler was back. Right after it aired, he phoned me, all agiggle. "Don Messick just phoned," he beamed, referring to his long-time co-star and the voice of Boo-Boo and the Ranger. "He said I sounded like my old self. And Paul called before [Paul Frees, another great voice actor, also recently deceased]." While we were talking, Call Waiting intervened and Daws returned to report that Bill Scott had phoned. "Bill said he wasn't sure that it wasn't a rerun of a show from the sixties." Daws was jubilant to find that, the thing he did best, he could still do.

Daws did it for six more years before he died, working steadily, doing what he loved, adding to a body of work that will be heard and enjoyed forever. He even, at age seventy-one, got to play eight-year-old Elroy again for the second coming of "The Jetsons." I tried to phone or visit him every month or three, just to keep in touch, just to find new ways of letting him know how much he meant to me. I must have said it a dozen different ways but it wasn't enough.

This, you learn the hard way. No matter how many times you say it...after they're gone, it was never enough.

— Mark Evanier

epic-grams

A few weeks ago we had the pleasure of visiting with AKIRA's creator, Katsuhiro Otomo, during his trip to New York. Otomo's visit was timed with the New York premiere of the animated film version of AKIRA. By all accounts, the movie and the various promotional programs dreamed up by Sven Larsen of our direct sales department and Epic Managing Editor, Marie Javins, were such a big hit that the film was held over. English translation scripter Jo Duffy, still nursing a sore hand from signing umpteen dozens of Akira comics at the movie premiere, joined Otomo, Javins, Editor Marc McLaurin, Publisher Mike Hobson, (then) President James Galton and yours truly for a fine lunch at the Players' Club. Traveling with Mr. Otomo were his editors from Kodansha's Japanese and New York offices, Hisataka Nishitani and Noriyuki Okazaki. A fine time was had by all but it wasn't just fun and games. After several meetings that more than earned the translators their pay, all parties agreed to bring more of Otomo's brilliant work to the U.S. market via Epic. We can't give out too much information right now but we'll be publishing at least **three** full color projects by AKIRA's guiding force in the next year or so. Stay tuned for further details!

—Carl Potts

checklist

FEBRUARY PREMIERE!

HELLRAISER TRADE PAPERBACK #1—Collecting some of Clive Barker's favorite terror tales from the epic series. Introduction by Douglas "Pinhead" Bradley from the films, and a new cover by John Bolton. For mature readers.

LIMITED SERIES

THE NEW ADVENTURES OF CHOLLY AND FLYTRAP #3 of 3—This is it! The pulse-pounding climax to this bizarre black humor series! Flytrap must fight in the ring against The Champ—to the death! For mature readers.

CADILLACS AND DINOSAURS #6 of 6—Three exciting tales, featuring Hannah's search for a young boy who disappeared ten years previously, leading her to the mysterious reptile men known as the Girth, plus tales of renegade revenge and the first man to fly in the Xenozoic age! By Mark Shultz with Steven Stiles.

ATOMIC AGE #4 of 4—The shattering conclusion as Nimbus discovers his true identity, and teams with his former prey, while Col. Lear's unbalancing obsession may cost him his career and push him over the edge—to deadly action! Welcome to the 1950's! Written by Frank Lovece, art by Mike Okamoto with Al Williamson.

ONGOING SERIES

HOLLYWOOD SUPERSTARS #5—The action-packed climax in the hazardous inner world of the Hollywood stuntman! Written by Mark Evanier, with art by Dan Spiegle with Sergio Aragones.

METROPOL #2—Jasper Notochord is in jail for a crime he didn't commit—a crime so horrible, the police won't talk about it! Meanwhile, the trail of death and plague is almost at his door. By Ted McKeever. For mature readers.

GROO THE WANDERER #76—When a sunken ship is found in the middle of the desert, there can only be one explanation: Groo was there! By Sergio Aragonés with Mark Evanier.

BLUEBERRY GRAPHIC NOVEL #6: THE IRON HORSE—Internationally acclaimed artist Moebius continues his Western saga of Lt. Blueberry in a "prequel" to BLUEBERRY #1-5. Here, Mike Blueberry is assigned to protect the construction of the great Trans-Continental railroad against Indian attack and industrial sabotage! Written by J. Charlier. Art by Moebius.

(l-r)
Carl Potts,
Hisataka Nishitani,
Katsuhiro Otomo,
Marc McLaurin,
Marie Javins.